

THE HUFFINGTON POST
CANADA 

Sex: A Tell-All Exhibition At Ottawa Museum Has Age Limit Raised After Minister Raises Concerns

Published May 16, 2012
By Althia Raj

Canada's Science and Technology Museum has abruptly raised the age limit for a controversial sex exhibit after Heritage Minister James Moore's office raised concerns and more than 50 individuals complained.

[Sex: A Tell-All Exhibition](#) is scheduled to open on Friday but already the Ottawa museum is facing a backlash, with one group asking Moore to shut it down completely.

Due to a higher than expected amount of complaints, the museum's vice president of public affairs, Yves St-Onge, said management decided to raise the age limit for children unaccompanied by an adult from 12 to 16.

The museum also decided to pull a video showing children how to masturbate.

"It was seen as particularly sensitive by many that have seen it," St-Onge told The Huffington Post Canada.

Moore's office seemed particularly troubled by the controversial exhibition, which was [designed for children 12 and up by the Montreal Science Centre](#) and aims to compliment sexual health curriculums.

"They called us and they asked questions about it but they did not ask us to do anything about it," St-Onge said about the conversation between Moore's office and the arm's-length Crown corporation. He said he didn't have the authority to specify what concerns were raised.

The sex exhibit garnered few complaints when it was first showed in Montreal in 2010 or even in Regina last year, said Julie Mailhot, a press relations officer with the Montreal Science Centre.

"There was no controversy, absolutely no controversy," she said.

The Montreal Science Centre developed the exhibit in close collaboration with a scientific committee that recommended the appropriate target age should be 12 and above, she said.

"Because around the age of 12 young girls start to develop their hormones and it's the same for boys, so that's why they said it was the right time," Mailhot said.

[The Institute for Marriage and Family Canada](#), which visited the show last week, believes the "erotic and titillating" exhibit doesn't belong in a museum.

In an [open letter to the heritage minister](#), Dave Quist, the Institute's executive director, said the exhibit approves and promotes anal sex, multiple partners and sex without emotional and marital commitment.

"Surely these topics are not a part of the mandate of the CMST [Canadian Museum of Science and Technology]," Quist wrote. "This exhibit includes what can only be described as soft pornography, expressly designed for youth in the context of a museum."

After going through a long list of the exhibit's features which the Institute found objectionable, including an area where visitors are encouraged to isolate erogenous zones on foam bodies and a section where the words "pussy, snatch, bush" and "prick, cock, dick" are mentioned, Quist asked for the whole thing to be shut down.

"Minister Moore, I would respectfully ask that this exhibition be cancelled," he wrote.

Moore's office refused any comment Wednesday. St-Onge said the exhibit was designed to engage with children at the very moment when sex is becoming an issue that is relevant to their lives.

"They need information, otherwise they will find it in the wrong place, or they may not find it at all and may not understand fully what is happening with their bodies and their lives and end up making right decisions or wrong decisions about sexuality that might have consequences in the future," he said.

The exhibit, which touches on STIs and homosexuality, also includes graphic images, such as nude photos of real-life models and a video on how to use condoms that uses a drawing of an anatomically-correct penis. But the area is tucked away so that parents with small children won't be shocked by nudity on their way to visit the Museum's well-loved trains.

St-Onge acknowledged he was puzzled as to why the exhibit is causing such controversy since displays in Montreal and Regina went off without a hitch.

"I don't understand ... I would really like to understand why the market in Ottawa — why is it that we are in such a different situation than Montreal or Regina?"

Sex: A Tell-All Exhibition is expected to cost \$60,000 — money that will come from general admission rather than museum operating revenues. It is expected to run until the end of December.